

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



**"The winds of freedom  
are blowing around the  
world—I have no doubt.**

**This fresh wind energizes Iranian protesters, who  
are standing on the streets and trying to take  
their country back from the hands of the mullahs.  
This wind also reminds all of us who live, and  
those who were born and raised in free countries,  
not to take democracy and liberty for granted."**

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**Garry Kasparov,**

HRF CHAIRMAN



Speech delivered at the 2022 Oslo  
Freedom Forum in New York

# WELCOME

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Years of resets and appeasement are over. Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine is both a war against another state and against democracy. The rubble of Mariupol, the missile attacks on children's parks, and the massacres in Bucha are the true face of authoritarianism. Perhaps the world woke up to tyranny's true nature and its ultimate objective. **Now is the time for collective global action because authoritarianism is on the rise everywhere. Putin isn't the only dictator with a murderous regime.**

China is committing genocide against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, erasing the Tibetan identity, and crushing freedom in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the Rwanda-backed militia, M23, is waging war in eastern Congo, driving tens of thousands of people to flee their homes. And in Iran, 22-year-old Mahsa Amini was arrested by the morality police for wearing an "improper" hijab and died in custody, sparking mass protests for individual freedom across the country.

From Belarus to Burma, Nicaragua to Uganda, dictators persecute dissidents, journalists, and artists who call for basic reform, expose truth, and express any desire for freedom. Enough is enough! Everyone should be able to express their opinions without fear of imprisonment. Everyone should be able to display their hair without fear of death.

**This report covers HRF's programs and areas of work over the past year**, which included successfully advocating for the release of prisoners of conscience from Saudi Arabia to Russia. HRF also promoted strategies for protecting human rights with industry leaders in policy, fashion, art, business, and tech. HRF's publication of op-eds in the world's top media outlets, and the exposure of human rights abuses around the globe through viral and innovative campaigns, are strategies that increased public awareness of tyranny. Furthermore, HRF provided humanitarian aid to places like Ukraine and Afghanistan while sparking new collaborations with human rights defenders.

At HRF, a cultivated community of brave individuals are collectively fighting tyranny. In May, HRF returned to Norway to host its flagship event, the Oslo Freedom Forum. There is no other conference in the world like it. HRF also held regional Oslo Freedom Forums in New York City and Taipei to bring activists' stories to a broader audience. The 2022 theme, "Champion of Change," celebrated the extraordinary individuals who risk their lives to promote freedom and democracy.

**The Human Rights Foundation has a simple goal: expose authoritarianism and defend democracy worldwide.** As a charitable organization without an endowment, HRF depends on the generosity of donors like you to carry out this crucial work. With your support, HRF continues to hold dictators and their henchmen accountable while supporting civil society leaders advocating for freedom and building a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic world.

With immense gratitude,



**Thor Halvorssen,**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Céline Assaf-Boustani,**  
President



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**CCP Virus**, created by Chinese dissident sculptor Weiming Chen, is placed in southern California's Liberty Sculpture Park and criticizes the Chinese government's mismanagement and censorship of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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Just one month after its unveiling, the statue is set ablaze by foreign agents of the CCP who wished to silence Chen's critique.



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In 2022, HRF helps Chen create a new, indestructible sculpture made of stainless steel as part of its commitment to supporting dissident artists who speak out against authoritarianism.





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# Global State of Democracy



**Democracies:**  
**104 countries**  
**3,597,609,556 people**

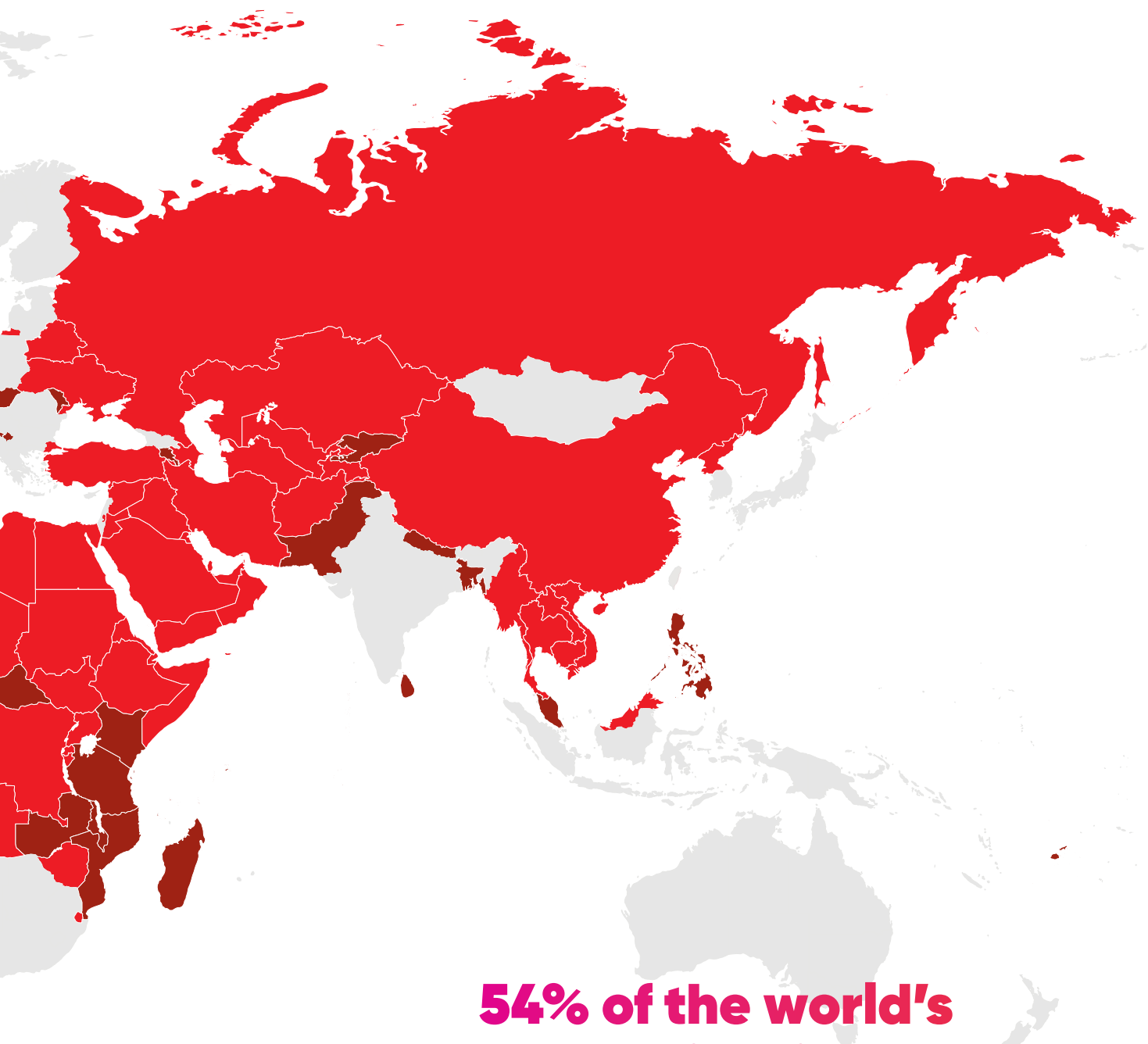
Open societies where there is a separation of powers between the different branches of government, free and fair elections, and respect for civil liberties.

**Competitive Authoritarian Regimes:**  
**41 countries**  
**1,230,291,718 people**

Societies where opposition parties are allowed to exist but suffer pervasive harassment and judicial persecution.

**Fully Authoritarian Regimes:**  
**57 countries**  
**3,044,930,789 people**

Societies where there are no free and fair elections, no separation of powers, no independent media, no vibrant civil society, and no civil liberties.



**54% of the world's  
population lives under an  
authoritarian regime.**



# 2022 Global Regime-Shaping Developments

1

## 1. El Salvador

The Congress, controlled by President Nayib Bukele, took steps to severely weaken the independence of the judiciary, including replacing the attorney general and members of the Supreme Court with political allies. The Constitutional Chamber later greenlit Bukele's bid for reelection, contradicting the Salvadoran Constitution. HRF released an episode of Dissidents and Dictators on this topic. Read more on p. 27.

2

## 2. Nicaragua

In March, the Nicaraguan regime handed down criminal convictions following sham trials against seven former presidential candidates and other prisoners of conscience, including former OFF speaker Félix Maradiaga. Maradiaga's wife, Berta Valle, spoke at the 2022 OFF in New York, featured on p. 19.

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## 3. Cuba

In 2022, the regime handed down prison sentences of up to 25 years to hundreds of people who participated in the peaceful 2021 anti-government protests, including pro-democracy activist Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara. In November, HRF secured a decision from the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNW-GAD), concluding that his detention violates international law. Read about HRF's Impact Litigation program on p. 13.

4

## 4. Guinea

In September, the trial of former Guinean president and military ruler Moussa Dadis Camara took place. Camara and 10 other men were indicted for their roles in the killings of more than 150 people and the rapes of more than 100 women in the capital, Conakry.

## 5. Ukraine

On Feb. 24, Russia invaded Ukraine, setting into motion Europe's largest conflict since World War II. Since then, Vladimir Putin's regime has committed numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity. Read about HRF's Ukraine Solidarity Fund on p. 53.

## 6. Syria

March marked the 11th anniversary of the Syrian Revolution. In April 2020, after years of war and ongoing human rights abuses, the first public criminal trial under the legal principle of universal jurisdiction on state torture in Syria was initiated. Read about HRF's report *Framing Justice in Syria: The Road Toward Comprehensive Justice* on p. 16.

## 7. Iran

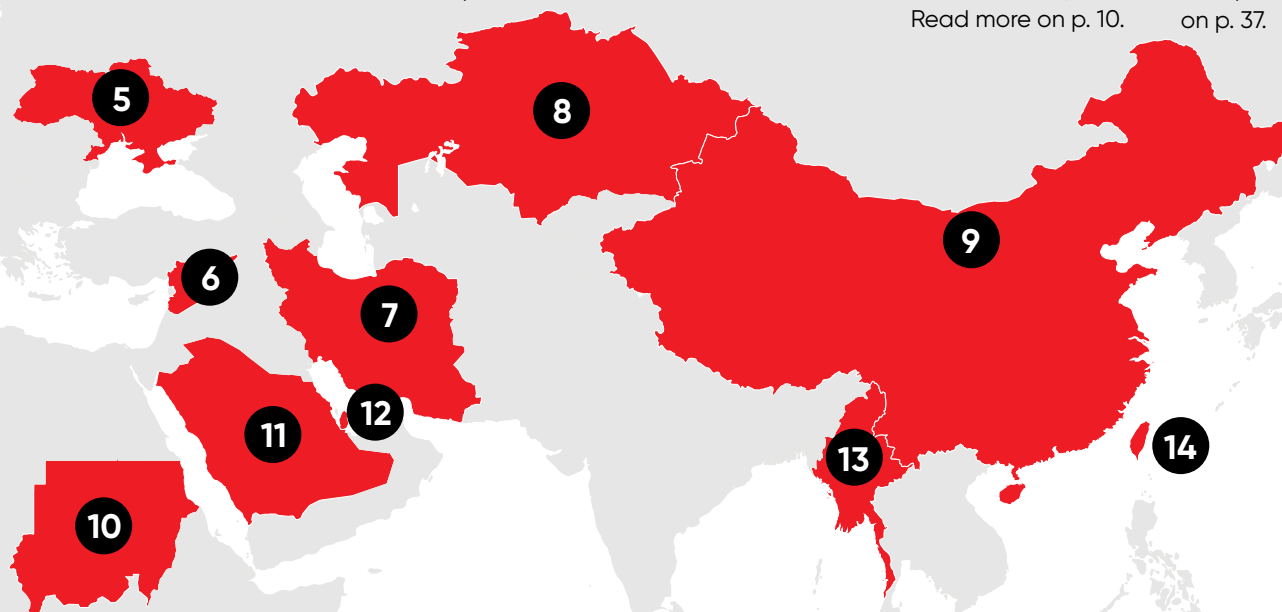
In September, following Mahsa Amini's murder by the Iranian morality police, protests erupted across Iran. The women-led revolution called for the removal of the compulsory hijab law and the resignation of Iran's ruler, Ebrahim Raisi. Iranian activist Masih Alinejad spoke at the 2022 OFF in New York, featured on p. 21.

## 8. Kazakhstan

In January, tens of thousands of people across Kazakhstan took to the streets after a sharp rise in gas prices. Protesters expressed dissatisfaction with the regime's handling of the economy, and many called for democracy. HRF published a series of policy notes providing context on the Kazakh regime. Read more on p. 10.

## 9. China

In October, China held its 20th National Congress, and Xi Jinping solidified his power by securing a third term. Two months later, protests against COVID restrictions erupted across the country in the biggest show of defiance since Tiananmen Square. Read about HRF's CCP Disruption Initiative on p. 37.



## 10. Sudan

In January, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok of Sudan stepped down after months of anti-coup protests. He was ousted in October 2021 but was reinstated a month later due to a military deal. Over 100 pro-democracy protesters were killed, and thousands more were injured.

## 11. Saudi Arabia

On Nov. 17, the Biden administration granted Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman immunity in the lawsuit over the murder of *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi, inciting outrage from human rights activists, including Khashoggi's fiancée and former OFF speaker, Hatice Cengiz. Read about HRF's Impact Litigation work in Saudi Arabia on p. 13.

## 12. Qatar

In November and December, Qatar hosted the 2022 World Cup, drawing international condemnation of the regime's human rights abuses — most notably, its use of forced labor to build the World Cup stadiums and its repression of free speech. Read more on HRF's Qatar white paper on p. 16.

## 13. Burma

On July 25, Burma's military junta executed four pro-democracy activists — the first known executions since 1998. More than 100 people remain imprisoned with death sentences. HRF invited Burmese activist Wai Hnin Pwint Thon to speak about the situation at the 2022 OFF in Taiwan, featured on p. 22.

## 14. Taiwan

In August, former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi became the highest-ranking United States official to visit Taiwan in 25 years. She met with Taiwanese lawmakers to discuss the preservation of democracy. Read about HRF's OFF in Taiwan on p. 22.

# 01

## HRF IN THE NEWS

A free press is essential in maintaining justice and order and holding those in positions of power to account.

HRF's extensive media coverage and original op-eds publicize the struggle for human rights and the reality of authoritarianism. HRF's advocacy campaigns and events were covered by *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Daily News*.

### 23.5k

Media Mentions

### \$1.3b

Earned Media Value

### 23.9k+

Social Media Impressions





# HRF OP-EDS

HRF's original op-eds highlight many of today's most pressing human rights issues and educate the public on how to support liberal democracy worldwide.

**NATIONAL REVIEW**



**Hollywood Should Stand with Protestors Against China's Oppression**

Dec. 8, 2022

**The Seattle Times**



**Biden's Visit to Saudi Arabia Disappoints Human Rights Activists**

June 26, 2022

**Chicago Tribune**



**Garry Kasparov: How the Free World Gave Putin the Green Light**

Feb. 25, 2022

**WSJ**



**Iran Tried to Kill Me on American Soil**

Aug. 7, 2022

**THE GLOBEPOST**



**It's Time We Give Corporations a Human Rights Scorecard**

March 1, 2022

**DAILYNEWS**



**More Than Ever, We Need a General Assembly for Dissidents**

Sept. 23, 2022

# MEDIA COVERAGE

"One of the greatest benefits of the Oslo Freedom Forum is that it makes people feel less alone. If you are a dissident up against a dictatorship, you can feel very, very alone. But the people at OFF are in the same boat, so to speak. They can trade stories, compare notes — be understood."

– Jay Nordlinger,  
*National Review*

## NATIONAL REVIEW



**For Freedom, Against Dictatorship**  
By Jay Nordlinger | June 1, 2022

## The Guardian



**'You Have to Step Over Your Fear':  
How to Take on a Dictator**  
By Tracy McVeigh | June. 7, 2022

## CNBC



**How Crypto Could Change the Way  
Organizations Provide Humanitarian Aid**  
By Tanaya Macheel & Darren Geeter | Mar. 1, 2022

## The Guardian



**'Insightful and Courageous': Gabon  
Activist Hervé Mombo Kinga Dies of Covid**  
By Saeed Kamali Dehghan | Feb. 18, 2022

## GLAMOUR



**Why Are People Boycotting  
the 2022 Winter Olympics?**  
By Jenny Singer | Feb. 9, 2022



"We are in the forefront of the battle between autocracy and democracy in this world. We are fighting for our right to have a democratic choice."

- Oleksandra Matviichuk  
in *TIME*

## TIME



## Tablet



## Newsweek



## CNN

"If we don't get united to end dictatorship, then the dictators will get united to end democracy. We're not fighting just for ourselves. We are fighting for democracy. We're trying to protect the rest of the world from these dictators."

- Masih Alinejad  
in *CNN*



## NEW YORK POST



## The Washington Post



## CB NEWS





# 02

# POLICY, RESEARCH, AND LEGAL ADVOCACY

## Analyzing the State of Political Freedom and Threats of Authoritarianism Globally

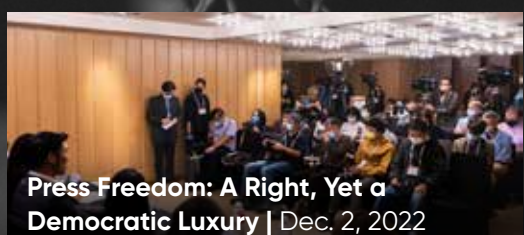
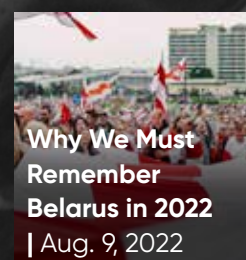
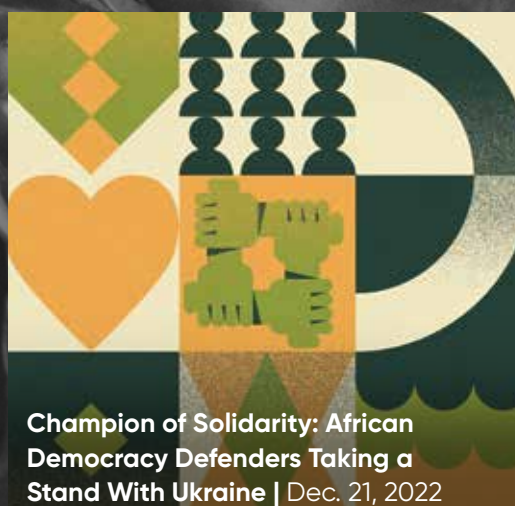
HRF's Center for Law and Democracy analyzes developments within the 98 closed societies monitored by HRF. This research takes the form of reports, op-eds, policy notes, and blogs, thereby allowing HRF to inform the public of human rights abuses occurring under authoritarian regimes.

HRF's policy research foundationally supports its advocacy strategies, ensuring HRF's mission of promoting and protecting democracy worldwide is fulfilled.

The team of international attorneys at HRF identifies activists, journalists, and other civil society leaders unfairly targeted by authoritarianism. HRF's *pro bono* work includes submitting emblematic cases to judicial and semi-judicial bodies to achieve accountability, justice, and the protection of human rights.

# NOTES ON POLICY

HRF's Notes on Policy series explores specific human rights issues in its focus countries, aiming to further public understanding. HRF publishes these notes on its website and social media accounts.





# OUR STRATEGY

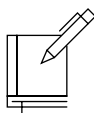


## Advocacy

When an individual is arbitrarily detained, **HRF appeals to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) and UN Special Rapporteurs.**

The **UNWGAD** is a body of independent human rights experts that investigates arbitrary detentions.

**Special Rapporteurs** are independent experts responsible for monitoring specific human rights.



## Documentation

**HRF submits Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) to the UN Human Rights Council**, detailing the human rights abuses of UN Member States.

Through **UPRs**, the UPR Working Group reviews the human rights records of UN Member States.

The **UN Human Rights Council** is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world.

## How does HRF respond to violations of civil and political human rights?



## Exposure

**HRF publishes a statement, press release, op-ed, and/or report on the human rights violation(s).**

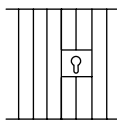


## Sanctions

Under the **Magnitsky Act**, HRF submits a case to the US government against perpetrators of corruption and human rights abuses.

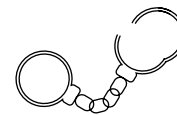
The **US Global Magnitsky Act** authorizes sanctions against corrupt actors and human rights abusers.





UNWGAD issues an opinion declaring the individual's detention to be arbitrary and urging the regime to release the individual.

Special Rapporteurs call on the offending regime to release the individual.



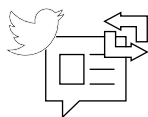
**HRF leverages these official statements to advocate for the re-release of the individual.**



HRF's UPRs are used to inform outcome reports for Member States.



**Member States feel pressure from the UN to improve their human rights records before the next review.**



Members of HRF's community and the general public spread the message within their networks.



**News outlets amplify the message, further pressuring the regime.**



The US blocks and freezes US-based property of the perpetrators involved.



**Sanctioned individuals and entities cannot participate in the US financial system, limiting their influence.**

# IMPACT LITIGATION

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HRF's team of international attorneys has a 100% success rate in petitioning the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) on behalf of clients who have been arbitrarily detained. Last year, HRF submitted five petitions *pro bono* to the UNWGAD for individuals in China, Belarus, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Morocco. HRF also submitted its first petition to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and four urgent appeals on behalf of individuals in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

HRF witnessed the fruits of this work when Saudi writer and activist Raif Badawi was released in March after 10 years in prison; in 2019, HRF filed an urgent appeal jointly with the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights on Badawi's behalf.

## Closer Look at HRF's Cases



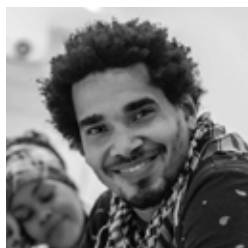
### Salma Al-Shehab / SAUDI ARABIA

Al-Shehab, a Saudi women's rights advocate, was arrested in January 2021 for tweeting about women's rights and political prisoners. In March 2022, she was found guilty of "undermining public order" and "destabilizing the security of society" and sentenced to six years in prison. On appeal, her sentence was increased to 34 years, with an additional travel ban of 34 years.



### The Lee Family / CHINA

The Lees fled North Korea after facing discrimination under the hereditary songbun class system. While at a temporary shelter in China, they were arrested for illegal immigration and have been held incommunicado since January 2021. The Lees are at risk of being repatriated to North Korea and facing further human rights violations.



### Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara / CUBA

Otero Alcántara is a Cuban performance artist and leader of the opposition group, the San Isidro Movement. In July 2021, he called on fellow Cubans to join him at protests in Havana and was thereafter arrested. HRF's UNWGAD petition on Otero Alcántara's behalf elicited a favorable decision that deemed his detention arbitrary and called on the Cuban government to release him from Guanajay maximum security prison.

# ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE

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HRF documents the links between corruption and authoritarianism and submits evidentiary case files to the US Departments of State and Treasury under the Magnitsky Act. This allows the American government to revoke visas, freeze assets, and sanction foreign officials who have committed, overseen, or financed serious human rights abuses.

- In August, HRF submitted a case recommending Magnitsky sanctions and Section 7031(c) visa restrictions for two Turkish officials involved in torture.
- In support of Ukraine, HRF joined the Russia Sanctions Working Group, in partnership with Human Rights First and other leading NGOs and activists, signing onto two letters. One urged the Biden administration to support continued Internet access for the Russian people. The second supported JusticeInfo.net's appeal to the international community to support the International Criminal Court's investigation into war crimes in Ukraine.
- In April, HRF co-formed an Urgent Task Force to advocate for the release of Russian activist (and former OFF speaker) Vladimir Kara-Murza.

# UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEWS

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Another way HRF focuses its advocacy work is by submitting Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) to the UN Human Rights Council on behalf of activists or groups. UPRs allow civil society groups to bring attention to human rights abuses by raising issues under international covenants and conventions. In 2022, HRF submitted seven UPRs to the UN Human Rights Council for Algeria, Burundi, Gabon, Morocco, the Philippines, United Arab Emirates, and Zambia.



# HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND AUTHORITARIANISM

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Human Trafficking and Authoritarianism is a research-based program that investigates the correlation between authoritarianism and human trafficking.

While many organizations focus on these issues, HRF takes a unique angle: examining human trafficking in the context of authoritarianism. HRF's research has found that authoritarian regimes are more likely to perpetuate human trafficking because of structural issues like corruption, repression, and the lack of rule of law.

HRF published its first report on human trafficking in 2018. This year, HRF hired three research fellows and established a fully-fledged program with the following aims:

## 1 Research

Analyze the links between authoritarianism and human trafficking.  
Produce reports, policy blog posts, and op-eds to raise awareness.

## 2 Advocacy

Apply pressure on the US government through targeted campaigns and open letters, and raise public awareness through events and panel discussions.

## 3 Litigation

File petitions with the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, and compile a database of abuses and victims for future submissions and possible formal redress.



# HRF REPORTS

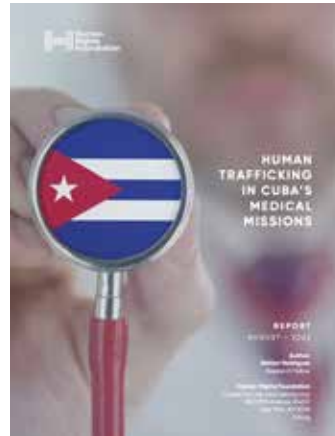


## **Framing Justice in Syria: The Road Toward Comprehensive Justice**

April

In this comprehensive report, HRF examines the judicial avenues to prosecute the crimes against humanity

committed in Syria, using the Koblenz Trial as a case study. The Koblenz Trial was the first public criminal trial under the principle of universal jurisdiction on state torture in Syria, which led to the conviction of two former agents of dictator Bashar al-Assad for crimes against humanity.



## **Human Trafficking in Cuba's Medical Missions**

August

This report addresses Cuba's state-sponsored human trafficking scheme, run through a decades-long

program of international medical missions. HRF's analysis shows that the Cuban regime has imposed coercive and retaliatory practices against health-care professionals to avoid desertion, enforced in ways that violate international law protecting victims of human trafficking.



## **Qatar's Human Rights Record in the World's Spotlight**

November

Following the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, this white paper highlights the country's worst human rights abuses, including those against migrant workers, po-

litical prisoners, and LGBTQI+ persons. HRF provides several policy recommendations for reform within Qatar and action points for the global community.



## **Authoritarianism and Trafficking in Persons**

December

This global brief explores the strong connection between human trafficking and authoritarianism through an analysis of the US State Department's 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report and four case studies. HRF's research determined that authoritarian regimes are less likely to make significant efforts to combat human trafficking within their borders, while democratic regimes are more likely to.

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# 03

# PUBLIC EDUCATION AND EVENTS

## Mobilizing an International Audience to Support Human Rights

The Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF) is HRF's international conference series, which provides a platform for human rights defenders to share their stories with a global audience and garner more support for their causes.

Confronting tyranny requires international solidarity from diverse communities and industries across the world. This is why HRF has dedicated significant resources to events that shed light on the dark realities of authoritarianism, connect individuals with new strategies for promoting freedom, and unite an international audience to stand against dictatorship.

# HRF SPEAKS AT GLOBAL EVENTS

## SXSW

### South by Southwest (SXSW)

Austin, Texas | March 10-19, 2022

HRF hosted two-panel discussions – “More than Just a Game: Gaming and Activism” and “The Aesthetics of Dictatorship” – at Austin’s renowned SXSW conference. HRF also produced an expo booth called “Gaming for Freedom,” which explored how video games can serve as a creative avenue for activism.



## RightsCon

Online | June 6-10, 2022

At the 11th edition of RightsCon, HRF organized a panel titled “Fake News, Censorship, and Encryption” on the tools authoritarian regimes use to discredit, censor, intimidate, and silence dissent. HRF Senior Strategy & Research Associate Jenny Wang also offered a tech demo about the Uyghur Forced Labor Checker (read more on p. 40).

## axel springer

### Axel Springer

Berlin, Germany | Nov. 28, 2022

HRF CEO Thor Halvorssen gave a speech at Axel Springer’s inaugural “Award for Courage” ceremony in Berlin. The media and tech company’s event honored the work of jailed Russian opposition leader Vladimir Kara-Murza. His wife, Evgenia Kara-Murza, received the award on his behalf.



### Commonwealth Club

Online | July 21, 2022

HRF Chief Advocacy Officer Roberto González and Director of Policy and Research Malaak Jamal spoke in a conversation titled “The Human Rights Foundation and Justice in Syria,” drawing upon HRF’s mission statement and its report on human rights in Syria.

## MarketWatch

### MarketWatch Money Festival

New York City | Sept. 21-22, 2022

For the first time, HRF attended MarketWatch’s annual Best New Ideas in Money Festival, where representatives showcased the recently launched Defund Dictators tool, bringing HRF’s Responsible Finance program to new audiences.

## bitcoin2022

### Bitcoin Conference

Miami, Florida | April 6-9, 2022

HRF Chief Strategy Officer Alex Gladstein moderated a panel titled “Bitcoin is Freedom” with North Korean defector Yeonmi Park, Togolese pro-democracy activist Farida Nabourema, and adjunct Senior Fellow at the American Security Project Fadi Elsalameen.

# 2022 Oslo Freedom Forum

OFF is a global conference series that brings together the world's most prominent human rights advocates, journalists, artists, technologists, entrepreneurs, and leaders to share their stories and brainstorm ways to expand freedom globally.

The theme for 2022, **Champion of Change**, represented a strong, scalable call to action, inviting the OFF community to advocate on behalf of activists and unite in the common cause of promoting freedom and liberal democracy.

## Former OFF Speakers Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

The Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded Belarusian dissident Ales Bialiatski (2009 OFF speaker) and the Ukrainian Center for Civil Liberties, headed by Oleksandra Matviichuk (2022 OFF speaker), the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize. The Committee pointed to their "outstanding effort" in challenging tyranny, documenting state abuse of civil liberties, and upholding human rights and democracy as their qualifications.



**Oleksandra  
Matviichuk**

2022 OFF SPEAKER



**Ales  
Bialiatski**

2009 OFF SPEAKER



## Oslo, Norway



The flagship Forum took place on May 23-25 at the Oslo Konserthus, where HRF's community reunited in person for the first time since 2019. Over three days, attendees listened to talks by world-renowned human rights defenders, participated in collaborative discussions and workshops, engaged with interactive art and tech exhibits, and brainstormed ways to advance freedom and democracy across the globe.



On the main stage, Omar Alshogre, Director of Detainee Affairs at the Syrian Emergency Task Force, recounts his daring escape from prison at age 20.



Bobby Ghosh and Jenifer Vaughan (Fenton) hold a workshop for activists on "How to Talk to the Media" as part of OFF interactive programming.

## New York, US



OFF in New York took place on Oct. 3 and featured talks by intrepid human rights defenders and performances by dissident artists at the historic Town Hall theater in New York City. Following the theater program, HRF hosted a Speaker Gala in the evening, where attendees connected with speakers, enjoyed views of the city from Peak NYC, and partook in HRF's first-ever silent auction.



On the Town Hall stage, Anna Kwok, exiled Hong Kong activist, reflects on the current and future state of freedom in Hong Kong.



Thor Halvorssen, Leopoldo López, Masih Alinejad, and Garry Kasparov introduce HRF's Speaker Gala at Peak NYC.

## Taipei, Taiwan



After a two-year hiatus, HRF returned to Taipei to host the third OFF in Taiwan on Nov. 3. In addition to activists' talks, theater programming included remarks from Taiwan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu, General Secretary of Taiwan's Parliamentary Human Rights Commission Wu'er Kaixi, and Taiwanese congressman Freddy Tshiong-Tso Lim. The half-day event also included private roundtables and an interactive exhibition featuring HRF's programs and more than a dozen local Taiwanese NGOs.

### HRF Meets with Taiwan's Highest Government Officials



HRF delegation meets with the president of the Legislative Yuan.  
Nov. 2, 2022

Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs warmly welcomed HRF by scheduling meetings with some of the highest government officials in the country – including the President of the Control Yuan and Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission, Chen Chu, and the President of the Legislative Yuan, You Si-kun. These meetings were a valuable opportunity for global activists to exchange ideas directly with Taiwan's government.



# Stories of Impact: Carine Kanimba

**T**he Oslo Konserthus buzzed with activity. Some guests walked briskly to the next panel discussion, others meandered through the halls, admiring art installations and engaging with interactive exhibits, and others partook in lively networking.

And in a small room at the back of the Konserthus, two software engineers from the Citizen Lab, a Canadian digital security research lab, made a shocking discovery.

The mobile phone of Carine Kanimba, a dual US-Belgian citizen and daughter of Paul Rusesabagina, the real-life hero from the Hollywood film “Hotel Rwanda,” was infected with Pegasus spyware, allowing the Rwandan regime to secretly monitor all of her correspondences and conversations.



Kanimba was at the Forum to speak about her father, who fell victim to an elaborate operation of transnational repression orchestrated by the regime of dictator Paul Kagame. Rusesabagina had been extrajudicially rendered to Rwanda, branded a terrorist, and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Kanimba was born in Rwanda in 1993, just one year before the genocide. When violence erupted in April 1994, her parents – both members of the Tutsi minority – were among the first victims. Carine and her sister Anaïse were saved and taken to a refugee camp. They were later adopted by Paul Rusesabagina, whose heroism in sheltering 1,268 people in the hotel he managed inspired the Hollywood film.

The genocide ended when the Tutsi rebel movement, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by Kagame, captured the capital city of Kigali in July 1994. But more mass atrocities ensued.

In the name of pursuing Hutu genocidaires, RPF forces carried out indiscriminate massacres of tens of thousands of civilians in Rwanda and in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The RPF’s military invasions of the DRC, a country the size of western Europe, sparked the bloodiest wars since World War II, killing five million people.







UN human rights experts have accused Kagame's regime and its allies of "war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possible crimes of genocide." In subsequent years, Kagame consolidated absolute power by jailing and killing critics and dissenters and discarding a previous Tutsi-Hutu power-sharing arrangement.

It is this tyranny that Kanimba's father first called out in his 2007 autobiography, "An Ordinary Man," and articulated during his speaking tours. As a result, the regime launched a massive disinformation campaign to discredit Rusesabagina and the film. Fearing for his safety,

Rusesabagina went into exile between Belgium and the US. From there, he continued to call for human rights in Rwanda, despite enduring near-constant persecution, including a break-in at his home, harassment, and assassination attempts.

In August 2020, Rusesabagina was lured from his home in San Antonio, Texas, under the false pretenses of an invitation to speak at an event in Burundi. Following a layover in Dubai, he boarded a plane, which he thought would take him to his destination. Instead, he was drugged and taken to Rwanda, where he was imprisoned under trumped-up terrorism charges.

It was an appalling case of transnational repression — and a poignant reminder of the lengths to which dictators such as Kagame will go to silence all forms of dissent.

After their father was kidnapped, the Kanimbas began fearlessly advocating for his release, rallying Hollywood celebrities such as Don Cheadle, Mark Ruffalo, and the cast of “The Avengers.” But as was the case with their father, the women’s outspoken stance against Kagame sparked a backlash from the Rwandan regime.

At OFF 2022, John Scott-Railton, senior researcher at the Citizen Lab, performed a forensic test on Kanimba’s US iPhone and found evidence of Pegasus, an NSO surveillance tool favored by authoritarian regimes around the world.

Kanimba was shocked. This was the second time Kagame had targeted her devices. In 2021, Amnesty International’s Security Lab found the same spyware on her Belgian phone. She wasn’t sure how long the regime had been listening in on her phone calls, reading her texts, and monitoring her behavior online.

But distress quickly morphed into determination. Kanimba clearly couldn’t hide from the regime, but she could use this experience to shine an international spotlight on Kagame’s abuses.

Kanimba shared her father’s story on the OFF stage in a conversation with author and journalist Michela Wrong. Hundreds of people were in the audience, and even more watched on the livestream. At the end of their conversation, HRF CEO Thor Halvorssen joined her on stage to make the dramatic announcement about the spyware.

“Just yesterday, we learned that my US phone is currently infected with Pegasus, which means that Paul Kagame is listening to us right now.

Do you want to talk to him?” Kanimba joked, handing the phone to Halvorssen. With a slight laugh, she tilted the phone toward her face and demanded: “Release my father!”

Kanimba’s appearance at OFF came on the heels of the State Department’s formal designation of her father, a US permanent resident, as a wrongful detainee and Rwanda as a hostage-taking state. In July, the House Intelligence Committee invited Kanimba and Scott-Railton to testify on Capitol Hill in a rare public committee hearing on commercial cyber surveillance. Together, they urged Congress to oppose the use of commercial spyware and discourage investment in spyware used by authoritarian regimes worldwide. Kanimba’s advocacy and congressional testimony resulted in 672 articles and billions of media impressions.

By August, in response to growing pressure, the Rwandan regime indicated its interest in negotiation talks with the US on Rusesabagina’s release. Kanimba credits OFF as a catalyst for this decisive impact.

Every year at OFF, human rights activists partner with digital security experts who can protect their devices, journalists who can publish feature pieces in top news outlets, philanthropists who offer the financial support needed to scale up their causes, and other changemakers with whom they can collaborate on new initiatives to protect human rights where they are most at risk.

HRF will continue to work with Kanimba and her family to ensure justice and freedom for Paul Rusesabagina.

# DISSIDENTS AND DICTATORS PODCAST

Dissidents and Dictators is a podcast series and a storytelling platform for some of the world's bravest activists, artists, policymakers, business leaders, and technologists.

Each episode raises awareness of a pressing human rights issue and sheds light on the important work being done to address it. Dissidents and Dictators allows HRF to educate new audiences worldwide, bringing human rights into the mainstream of public discussion. Episodes are available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, SoundCloud, and YouTube.

## Doubling HRF's Episodes in 2022

4

Streaming  
Platforms

40

Episodes  
Shared

86k

Total  
Listeners

## 2022 Podcast Highlights



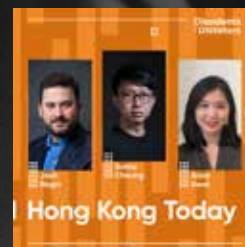
**Understanding Putin's War**  
April 1, 2022  
Garry Kasparov, Anne Applebaum, Yulia Marushevska



**Human Development and Dictatorships**  
May 20, 2022  
Vincent Geloso



**SOS Nicaragua**  
June 3, 2022  
Berta Valle



**Hong Kong Today**  
July 22, 2022  
Sunny Cheung, Anna Kwok, Josh Rogin



# HRF'S NEW DOCUMENTARY: "Icarus: The Aftermath"

In September, "Icarus: The Aftermath," directed by Bryan Fogel and produced in collaboration with HRF, premiered at the Telluride Film Festival and garnered international praise.

The film is the sequel to the Academy Award-winning "Icarus," Bryan Fogel's 2017 documentary that tells the dramatic story of Russian whistleblower Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of the Russian anti-doping agency, RUSADA. Rodchenkov reveals the Russian regime's elaborate efforts to conceal the widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs by Russian Olympians. "Icarus" helped lead to a ban on Russia from competing in the 2018 Olympics.

"Icarus: The Aftermath" follows Rodchenkov, now a top target for assassination by the Putin regime, for five years as he enters the witness protection program, shuffling from one safe house to another. All the while, other Putin critics – former Russian military officer Sergei Skripal and Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny – are poisoned with the Novichok nerve agent. Thor Halvorssen, HRF's CEO, served as an executive producer for the film.



## THE WRAP

*"It drops mind-boggling revelations about the extent of Russian doping and the lengths to which Vladimir Putin's administration will go to silence dissidents and whistleblowers, but it's also a deeply touching portrait of a man whose life was shattered because he got tired of being part of a system that ran on lies."*

## IndieWire

*"A poignant and powerful document about the unpredictable burdens of heroism."*

## VARIETY

*"Even more shocking than the 2017 original."*

# 04

# GLOBAL CAMPAIGNS AND ADVOCACY

## Supporting Human Rights Activists Through Multi-Pronged Campaigns, Creative Initiatives, and Impactful Advocacy

One of the most important ways HRF uses its sizable platform is to advocate against abuse and repression in its countries of focus. Through innovative and multi-faceted campaigns, HRF finds new ways to challenge tyranny and bring conversations about human rights to diverse audiences.

Some campaigns target specific industries, like fashion or finance, to achieve a particular policy outcome. Others focus on capacity-building with leading human rights activists, offering them the training, tools, and connections needed to enhance their work. HRF also partners with global thought leaders to devise new strategies for evading repression from authoritarian regimes.

While HRF's campaigns vary in scope and strategy, they are united by the common goal of promoting freedom where it's most at risk: in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes.

# ART IN PROTEST

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**Art in Protest is HRF's response to the repression authoritarian regimes impose on creative dissent.**

Art is a powerful tool for dissent in closed societies, provoking constructive dialogue and creating space for debate beyond mainstream bodies of political discourse. Authoritarian regimes recognize the power of art as a conduit of change and systematically persecute, repress, or censor artists to silence political dissent.

Art in Protest seeks to elevate artists whose work is connected to their struggle for democracy and freedom. HRF offers dissident artists the opportunity to enhance their work and provides various platforms, virtual galleries, and exhibition spaces to expand their reach.

## Empowering At-Risk Artists

The **Art in Protest Residency** encourages dissident artists to find new, innovative ways of producing art that ignites democratic change and promotes free expression. Artists-in-residence spend three months developing a project that applies art and technology for social and civic impact.

## 2022 Resident Artists



**Tammam Azzam**  
Syrian contemporary artist



**Khalid Albaih**  
Sudanese creative and  
political cartoonist



## Sponsoring Dissident Art Exhibitions

### ART IN PROTEST

Private galleries are often wary of featuring dissident art out of fear of backlash from authoritarian regimes. HRF supports these artists by sponsoring exhibitions and showcases that elevate their work and generate more awareness for human rights causes.



#### **CCP Virus II by Weiming Chen:**

*CCP Virus*, by Chinese dissident sculptor Weiming Chen, highlights how the Chinese government's incompetence and state censorship sparked the COVID-19 pandemic. After CCP agents set the sculpture ablaze in July 2021, HRF sponsored the creation of a new, indestructible sculpture at the Liberty Sculpture Park in California's Mojave Desert.



#### **Transmuting Borders:**

*Transmuting Borders* is a digital installation featuring works from HRF's resident artists (shown above: *Syrian Museum* by Tammam Azzam). The installation, showcased at OFF 2022, explores themes of protest in the face of global authoritarianism and the refugee crisis it perpetuates.



#### **Memory Gates by Kevork Mourad:**

Kevork Mourad is a multidisciplinary Syrian-Armenian artist whose ancestors survived the Armenian Genocide. His piece, *Memory Gates*, exhibited at OFF 2022, appears constructed from stony blocks reminiscent of the monumental cities of the ancient Mediterranean world.



## **The Pillar of Shame by Jens Galschiøt:**

HRF, Amnesty International Norway, and the Hong Kong Committee in Norway unveiled *the Pillar of Shame* at the University of Oslo, to stand in solidarity with Hong Kongers and all those living under the Chinese Communist Party's unrelenting repression.



## **Stand With Ukraine by ArtLords:**

At OFF 2022, attendees contributed to an interactive mural in support of Ukrainians. ArtLords, a global grassroots movement of "artists" dedicated to using art to achieve social change, created the mural (see cover art).



## **No nos sirve de nada el miedo:**

In the context of the 2023 Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, HRF co-sponsored the dissident art exhibition, *No nos sirve de nada el miedo* ("Fear is of no use to us"), alongside the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, the Umbrella Art Foundation, and Gloria Delson Contemporary Arts gallery. The exhibition focused on activism, documentation, and memory and showcased works by prominent Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan artists.



# CELEBRITIES AND DICTATORS

**Celebrities and Dictators seeks to motivate celebrities, athletes, and other public figures to show solidarity with people living under authoritarian regimes.**

Fans count on celebrities to use their platforms to bring wider attention to important issues, but authoritarian regimes exploit celebrities to appear progressive in mainstream popular culture, spread propaganda, and hide their human rights abuses.

Celebrities and Dictators urges stars not to put their prestige at the service of serial human rights abusers. It's hypocritical for celebrities to vocalize support for good causes — such as women's rights or racial justice — while accepting money, a business partnership, or an invitation to perform from authoritarian regimes. Instead, HRF urges celebrities to stand against dictatorship and use their influence to spark a global conversation about human rights.

Over the years, this program's influence has spurred action from both celebrities and authoritarian regimes. In 2015, the Angolan regime released 15 political prisoners following a public uproar over rapper Nicki Minaj's performance for the dictatorship. And in 2020, US hip-hop artist Tyga canceled his performance for the Belarusian dictatorship and issued a statement to his millions of fans.

## A Closer Look: Sportswashing and the NBA

In 2021 and 2022, HRF sent letters to the National Basketball Association (NBA) Commissioner Adam Silver to express concern about the NBA's growing partnership with Rwanda's dictator, Paul Kagame. The NBA has offered Kagame — who has been accused by the UN of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and possible crimes of genocide for his military invasions of the DRC — a platform to speak and selected Rwanda as the main host of the NBA's upstart Basketball Africa League.

Since HRF sent the letters, neither Silver nor his deputy, Mark Tatum, has appeared publicly with Kagame. In 2021, Silver canceled his trip to Rwanda. In September, during an NBA Africa event at the 2022 UN General Assembly featuring Silver, Kagame was conspicuously absent — despite having appeared as a "guest of honor" at similar events in the past. HRF urges the NBA to cease doing business with serial human rights abusers like Kagame.





# RESPONSIBLE FINANCE

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**This year, HRF launched Responsible Finance, which aims to study the influence of authoritarian regimes on the world's most important financial systems.**

Rulers in dictatorships like China, Russia, and Saudi Arabia have allowed a certain degree of economic freedom at home while taking advantage of access to markets in rich democratic countries. These regimes – particularly China – have managed to turn their economies into crucial cogs for supply chains worldwide and important destinations for investments flowing from the democratic world.

Capital flows to these regimes are very problematic. There is a lack of transparency, an absence of the rule of law, and blurred lines between where the state ends and private ownership begins. They have enriched ruling elites and may directly finance egregious human rights abuses.

## Helping to Defund Dictators

On June 28, HRF launched the Defund Dictators tool in partnership with Life+Liberty Indexes. The tool focuses on Emerging Markets Exchange Traded Funds (EM ETFs), one of the fastest-growing investment vehicles in the world. It allows users to identify how much of the funds in each US-listed EM ETF is being allocated to countries ruled by authoritarian regimes.

**On the Defund Dictators website, users can search any listed EM ETF to see what portion of the fund is allocated to countries ruled by authoritarian regimes.**

Defund Dictators debuted at the 2022 Oslo Freedom Forum, where guests tried out the tool for the first time and learned which of their investments may be inadvertently propping up dictatorships.



# Flash Drives for Freedom



Flash Drives for Freedom aims to liberate North Koreans from Kim Jong-un's propaganda machine by sending outside information into North Korea via flash drives and SD cards.

## Coalition-Building to Advance North Koreans' Rights

One of HRF's new initiatives is to grow a local network of South Korean activists and policymakers dedicated to advancing human rights in North Korea. HRF's Flash Drives for Freedom (FDFF) program officer, Seongmin Lee – who defected from North Korea at age 23 – met with key policymakers, government officials, NGO leaders, and journalists to strengthen HRF's advocacy efforts. Lee is working with the newly-elected administration to reverse the previous government's pro-North Korean regime approach and instead promote North Korean rights.

Throughout 2022, HRF continued sending flash drives and SD cards with outside information to North Korea. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pyongyang shut down its borders in early 2020, making it increasingly difficult to send large quantities of memory devices into the country. HRF's partner organizations, however, employed creative workarounds, like placing the USBs in plastic water bottles filled with essential goods and floating them over the surrounding rivers.

## 2022 Achievements

**2,316**

Flash Drives  
Sent in 2022

**60+**

Meetings with Local  
Stakeholders

**40+**

Media Mentions

## All-Time Achievements

# 130k

Flash Drives and  
SD Cards Donated

# 1.3m

Estimated Number  
of North Koreans  
Reached

# 59m

Hours of Reading  
Materials  
Disseminated

# 2.5m

Hours of  
Footage Sent

## FDFF Awards



Silver Pencil Award 2018 –  
Public Relations Category



W3 Best in Show for Activism  
Award 2020 For “Best Cause-  
Related Campaign”



Webby People's Voice  
Award 2020 for “Best in  
Show-Activism Website”



# CCP DISRUPTION INITIATIVE

The CCP Disruption Initiative aims to expose the myriad ways the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s rapidly growing global influence and disregard for human rights poses a major threat to fundamental freedoms around the world.

At the CCP's 20th National Congress, which took place from Oct. 16–22, Xi Jinping solidified his power by securing a third term – breaking China's two-term rule – appointing his loyalists to top government positions, and enshrining his own political thought into the constitution. Xi emerged from the 20th Congress as the CCP's most powerful dictator since Mao Zedong. Growing frustrations across China reached new heights amid strict zero-COVID restrictions. In late November, protests erupted across the country in a remarkable display of brave defiance.

China is a fully authoritarian regime. The Chinese government routinely imprisons anyone who dares to criticize the CCP or speaks up for freedom and democracy.

The CCP Disruption Initiative aims to support those oppressed by the Chinese regime and to challenge Xi's power by increasing awareness about the CCP's ongoing attacks on civil liberties and inspiring a change in public attitudes toward Xi's authoritarian regime.

China's influence is rapidly evolving, as is the work of local dissidents. HRF believes it's crucial to provide a platform for young activists spearheading bold and innovative approaches to challenge the CCP's tyranny. The future of democracy and human rights in China and its peripheries now falls in the hands of the next generation.

## The Seven Main Focus Areas on the CCP

- 1 Crackdown on Chinese human rights defenders
- 2 Corporate intimidation
- 3 Uyghur genocide
- 4 Stifling of freedoms in Tibet
- 5 Trampling of freedoms in Hong Kong
- 6 Digital surveillance
- 7 China's global authoritarian expansion



## Taking Bold Steps to Confront CCP Repression



Before the 2022 Olympic Games in Beijing, HRF co-hosted a peaceful demonstration in front of the Capitol in Washington, DC, to denounce the CCP's systematic human rights violations.

Attention was thrown on the International Olympic Committee and corporate sponsors for allowing the genocidal Chinese government to host the Olympics, "sportswashing" its crimes.



HRF hosted Twitter Space conversations to elevate the voices of dissidents speaking against the CCP.

HRF's recent events, "Hong Kong Today" and "Youth Mobilizing in Exile: Standing Up Against the CCP," are now part of "Dissidents and Dictators" (see p. 27).



HRF sent private letters to key decision-makers, urging them to pay attention to the CCP's abuses.

HRF's outreach included brands such as Airbnb, Coca-Cola, and Volkswagen, academic institutions, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the US Treasury Department. This form of outreach paved the way for several private, closed-door meetings to discuss specific ways to stand up for human rights.



In March 2022, HRF submitted a public comment to the US Department of Homeland Security.

We aimed to ensure the US' Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) would be as robust and effective as possible. The Act was enforced in June 2022.





***Right now, more than one million Uyghur Muslims are arbitrarily detained and working at forced labor camps across China. This scheme is part of a broader strategy perpetrated by the Chinese government – a system of abuse that has unfolded into what has been recognized as genocide by the US.***

# Wear Your Values

**Wear Your Values explores the convergence of human rights and the global fashion industry through educational events, exhibitions, campaigns, and discussions.**

The fashion industry is one of the world's largest economies and employs millions globally. The most labor-intensive stages of production are often done in authoritarian countries where workers' rights are continuously violated without recourse. Wear Your Values encourages dialogue about human rights in the fashion industry, promotes transparency and human rights in global supply chains, and brings awareness to the stunning hidden social costs of the industry.

## HRF's Uncomfortable Truth Wins a Cannes Lion, Among Other Awards

HRF has joined the Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region, dedicated to ending forced labor and human rights violations perpetrated by China's authoritarian regime against the Uyghur population and other Turkic and Muslim-minority people.

This year, HRF's Uncomfortable Truth was recognized in numerous competitions in the creative industry, including the prestigious Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. HRF's innovative guerilla poster campaign and Google Chrome plug-in extension help inform shoppers about the issue of Uyghur forced labor. The most prominent awards include the following:





# 05

## DIRECT SUPPORT

### Providing Human Rights Advocates with Microgrants, Digital Security Tools, and Networking Opportunities

HRF works to directly support individual activists and civil society organizations on the frontlines of democratic change. This support can take various forms: technical support, training, fellowships, networking opportunities, and fundraising and financial support.

HRF believes supporting the work of civil society organizations in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes is far more impactful than high-level negotiations or military interventions. Many individuals and groups can't receive support in their home countries, and authoritarian regimes actively persecute some. This is why HRF's contributions are so valuable. HRF uses its international platform and expertise in authoritarian regimes to help activists protect freedom, expose corruption, and reform unjust systems.

Dictators  
Now v

OSLO  
FREL  
FORUM

around the world are united.  
we the freedom fighters  
must be united too.



# MICROGRANTS

## HRF's Microgrants program provides financial support to activists challenging tyranny.

HRF helps to facilitate microgrants for select human rights activists and civil society leaders with demonstrated financial need. HRF tracks the impact of each microgrant and assists recipients in leveraging their funds to achieve the greatest change possible.

*"HRF's microgrant to Courage Fund Cambodia provided legal assistance to women whose husbands are political prisoners. After staging a protest outside the European Union Embassy and the US Embassy in Phnom Penh, other youth and environmental activists joined the women to demand the immediate release of all political prisoners and free and fair elections in 2023. The women supported by HRF now make daily appearances on social media and receive full attention from key embassies and the UN Human Rights Office in Cambodia. Thank you!"*



### Courage Fund Cambodia

#### Mu Sochua

Cambodian human rights activist, exiled opposition politician, and former OFF speaker

*"In 2022, thanks to HRF, the Institute for Peace and Democracy (IPD) launched training courses on computer and iPhone security and safe communications for journalists and activists in Azerbaijan. IPD focuses on the persecution of religious individuals in Azerbaijan. With HRF's microgrant, IPD is also working on a research project, "Religious Situation in Azerbaijan in 2022," which will be posted on our website."*



### Institute for Peace and Democracy

#### Arif Yunusov

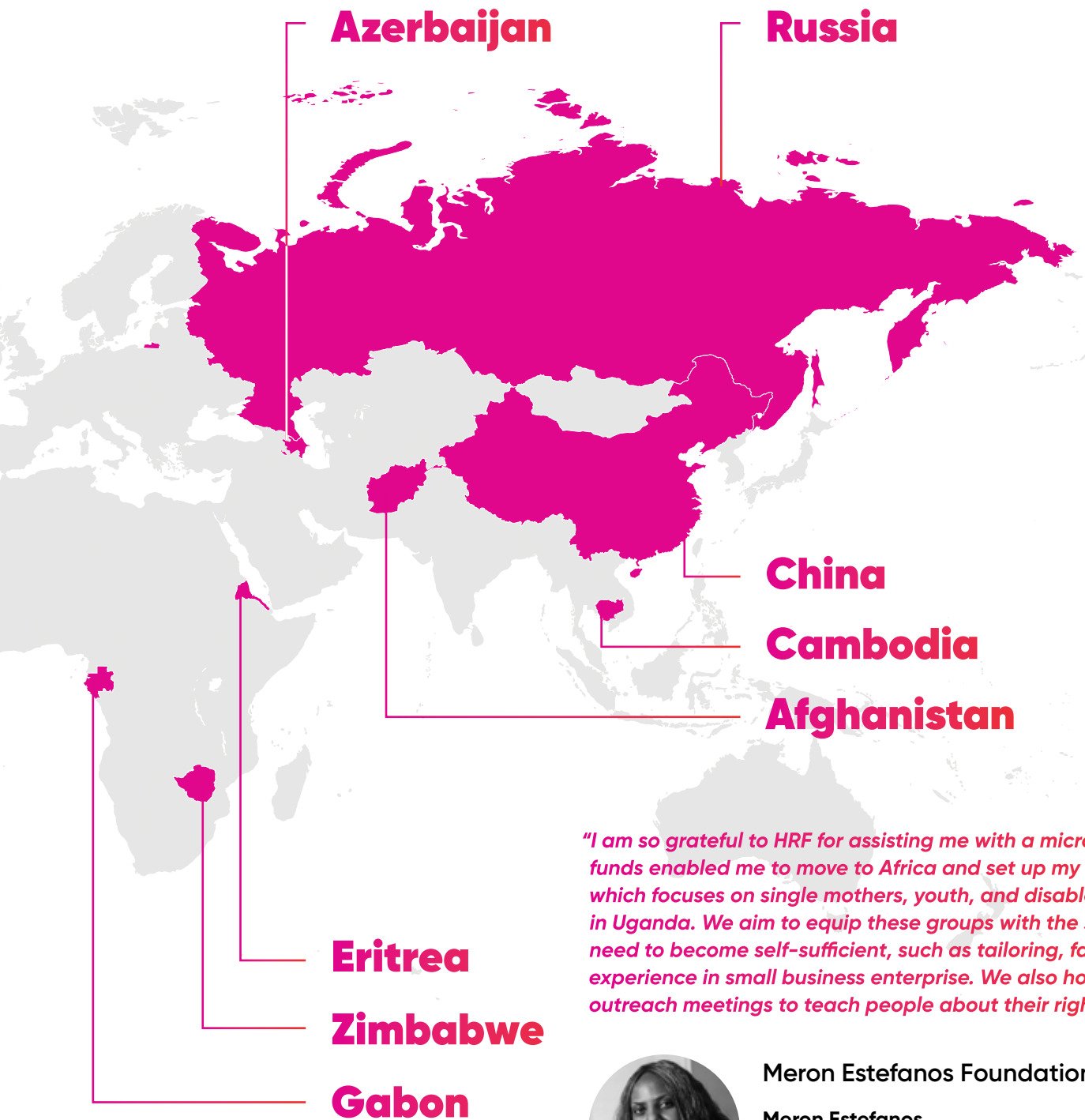
Azerbaijani author, historian, and human rights activist

**Cuba**

**Bolivia**

**Venezuela**

**Nicaragua**



*"I am so grateful to HRF for assisting me with a microgrant. The funds enabled me to move to Africa and set up my own NGO, which focuses on single mothers, youth, and disabled people in Uganda. We aim to equip these groups with the skills they need to become self-sufficient, such as tailoring, farming, and experience in small business enterprise. We also host community outreach meetings to teach people about their rights in society."*



**Meron Estefanos Foundation**

**Meron Estefanos**

*Eritrean journalist, human rights activist,  
and former OFF speaker*



# FREEDOM FELLOWSHIP

The Freedom Fellowship awards up to 10 human rights advocates, social entrepreneurs, and nonprofit leaders the unique opportunity to dramatically increase the impact of their work.

While there are numerous professional fellowship opportunities worldwide, few are available for individuals working in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes. Through the Freedom Fellowship, HRF offers mentorship opportunities to extraordinary individuals promoting human rights under challenging circumstances.

HRF has partnered with the Center for Applied Nonviolent Tactics and Strategies (CANVAS), founded by Serbian civic leader and non-violence strategist Srdja Popović, to build this revolutionary year-long program. The Fellowship aims to cultivate a growing community of human rights activists who serve as peers and mentors to one another, helping amplify their colleagues' work worldwide.

## Freedom Fellows Class of 2022



**Pema  
Doma**

Tibet and China



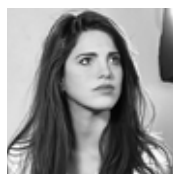
**Somaya  
Faruqi**

Afghanistan



**Malcolm  
Bidali**

Qatar and Kenya



**Carolina  
Barrero**

Cuba



**Marina  
Dubina**

Belarus



**Toufah  
Jallow**

The Gambia

HOW IT WORKS



## Introduction

The year-long fellowship kicks off at HRF's annual OFF in Norway, where Fellows meet for the first time and witness the impactful work of this event.



## Working Retreat

Later in the year, Fellows embark on a one-week retreat, which focuses on nonviolent movement-building and strategic planning, led by Popović Srdja.



## Mentorship Sessions

Fellows also convene in other locations around the world for in-person mentorship on digital security, fundraising, mental health, and marketing.



## Individual Projects

Between their in-person sessions, Fellows continue online work in close collaboration with their new peers and mentors. Over time, they gain the skills and connections necessary to expand the reach of their causes.



## Final Presentation

These efforts culminate in a final presentation at the following OFF in Norway, after which Fellows serve as mentors to the new incoming class of Freedom Fellows.

## Activist Spotlights:

### Evgeniya Chirikova and Sakdiyah Ma'ruf

FREEDOM FELLOWSHIP

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#### Evgeniya Chirikova



**Evgeniya Chirikova** is a Russian environmental and human rights activist who worked for over a decade to protect Russia's forests from Putin's infrastructure projects. As a Freedom Fellow, Chirikova learned about the importance of coalition-building and gained strategic contacts in the field of advocacy. When Putin invaded Ukraine last February, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians were deported to Russia. Chirikova realized she needed to turn her attention toward the refugee crisis. With HRF's emergency grant support, Chirikova evacuated 19 journalists from Russia to safe territories in surrounding nations. HRF also helped Chirikova secure a grant from Avaaz, a US-based campaigning community, to provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees. With this grant, her team evacuates displaced Ukrainian refugees to countries outside Russia, providing them with shelter, medical care, and education for children.

**"Today, I am a more resourceful activist than before I took part in the Freedom Fellowship. I finally feel that I have a network I can rely on in times of need. The Freedom Fellowship and HRF's support made me feel more powerful and energized in my work as an activist."**

— Evgeniya Chirikova

## Sakdiyah Ma'ruf



**Sakdiyah Ma'ruf** is the first Muslim female stand-up comic in Indonesia whose comedic routine advocates for individual rights and challenges Islamic fundamentalism. Ma'ruf credits the Freedom Fellowship with helping her better understand the intersection between creativity and movement-building. With the support of the Freedom Fellowship, she founded a movement called "Our Voice, Comedy for Change," which provides workshops for female comedians in Indonesia. The country continues to face challenges to freedom of expression, violence toward women, religious conservatism, and a lack of independent media. Ma'ruf's workshops teach women how to use comedy to promote creative expression, speak out against injustice, and engage civil society to reflect on Indonesia's socio-political challenges.

**"The Freedom Fellowship is one of the highlights of my years as an activist and a creative. My education allowed me to reconcile my comedy with my activism, and helped me build a movement around principles of 'laughtivism.'"**

— Sakdiyah Ma'ruf



# FINANCIAL FREEDOM

*"The digital security training I received from HRF has been useful in my daily life and in my work as an activist. We live in a time where the phone, social networks, and other tools can serve our cause, but also be a gateway to those who want to undermine our struggle. HRF's trainings have not only allowed us to understand this new system, but also to protect ourselves against risk in the digital space."*

— Fred Bauma,  
Congoese pro-democracy leader

## Connecting Digital Security Experts with Activists

HRF connects activists who live under dictatorships with world-class technologists who can provide the resources they need to protect their privacy, stop state surveillance, and advance free expression and press freedom. HRF ran a series of workshops with representatives from Twitter, Jigsaw, Yubico, and the Citizen Lab.

For example, at OFF 2022, Citizen Lab staff scanned hundreds of phones from attendees to see if any were infected with the Pegasus malware. Several devices were infected and have since been fixed due to the HRF's efforts.



Oslo Freedom Forum 2022 | Oslo, Norway  
Financial Freedom Panel: The Quest for Financial Freedom

## Helping Activists Achieve Financial Freedom

Encrypted messaging and virtual private networks are well-known tools for human rights activists, but many have yet to learn about the potential of Bitcoin as a bulwark against financial repression. In many countries, the legacy financial system is censored, frozen, surveilled, and slowed. Using cash can be dangerous, and receiving funds in bank accounts can be risky. More than 2.2 billion people live under double-, triple-, or even quadruple-digit inflation. In response, pro-democracy organizations across the world — from Belarus to Nigeria, Russia, and Hong Kong — have used Bitcoin to raise millions of dollars in funds, even after their bank accounts were shut down.

HRF focuses on providing direct support to human rights activists, funding the development of the Bitcoin network, and raising awareness of how to use Bitcoin as a tool for financial freedom.

## Bitcoin Development Fund

HRF's Bitcoin Development Fund supports software developers making the Bitcoin network more private, decentralized, and resilient, so it can better serve as a financial tool for human rights activists, civil society organizations, and journalists worldwide. Since its creation in 2020, the Bitcoin Development Fund has awarded more than \$1.5 million to Bitcoin developers, designers, educators, and wallet creators working to improve the usability of Bitcoin for human rights activists.



Bitcoin Academy 2022 | Intro to Bitcoin Workshop

## As a Result of Our Support:



Bitcoin is becoming easier for human rights activists to use through free and open-source tools, such as Sparrow and BTCPay, that allow activists to fundraise and store their Bitcoin safely and effectively.



Independent media outlets worldwide, including *Novaya Gazeta Europe*, *El Toque*, *The Daily Maverick*, *Netblocks*, and the *Democratic Voice of Burma*, expanded their coverage of financial freedom issues.



Bitcoin Pakistan is translating resources into Urdu. A top-20 world language, Urdu is spoken by more than 60 million people worldwide but has little Bitcoin content. Bitcoin Pakistan aims to change this with HRF's help.

### Other HRF achievements in the field of financial freedom in the past year include:

- Partnering with the Norwegian company Aker's Seetee division to host financial freedom workshops at the OFF;
- Speaking alongside activists from North Korea, Togo, and Palestine on the main stage of the Bitcoin Conference in Miami in front of more than 10,000 people;
- Publishing a book and short film titled "Check Your Financial Privilege," which tell the stories of Bitcoin users in dictatorships worldwide;
- Launching [getbitcoin.org](https://getbitcoin.org), a tool for activists to get their first Bitcoin, and [btcfor nonprofits.org](https://btcfor nonprofits.org), a handy guide for nonprofits on how and why to incorporate Bitcoin safely into their work;
- Running a financial freedom workshop for Hong Kong activists at their annual event in Washington, DC;
- Reaching millions of people with HRF's financial freedom-related articles, social media content, and short videos;
- Sponsoring and speaking at the Africa Bitcoin Conference, the first of its kind on the continent, which took place in Accra, Ghana, on Dec. 5-8 and was organized by former Freedom Fellow Farida Nabourema;
- Organizing "Currency of Freedom" on Nov. 7, a virtual event hosted by Block CEO Jack Dorsey, featuring talks by HRF President Céline Assaf-Boustani, HRF Chairman Garry Kasparov, and activists from a dozen countries;
- Speaking about HRF's financial freedom work at conferences everywhere from Austin to Amsterdam, Bengaluru, London, and Los Angeles;
- And sponsoring groundbreaking research into the feasibility of implementing validity rollups into the Bitcoin software, which could potentially improve users' access and privacy worldwide.

# OSLO SCHOLARS

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**The Oslo Scholars program allows university students to intern with some of the world's leading human rights defenders and activists.**

Based on their regional knowledge, language abilities, and thematic interests, candidates are paired with current or past OFF speakers and work with them in the field or another research capacity for a summer internship. Oslo Scholars provides students with valuable professional experiences and mentorship opportunities while helping civil society organizations recruit much-needed volunteer interns interested in human rights.

## **Nine Internships at Civil Society Organizations**

This year, HRF facilitated nine internships for college students from Harvard University, Tufts University, and Wellesley College. Students had the unique opportunity to gain firsthand experience in public policy, advocacy, research and writing, humanitarian aid, communications, and more.



## **Zhengxi Wu**

**Tufts University**

*"Thanks to Oslo Scholars, I had the opportunity to apply critical thinking, problem-solving, and oral communication in the workplace. During my internship at Now Action and Unity for Human Rights (NAUH), a nonprofit dedicated to research and advocacy around North Korean human rights issues, I gained critical experience in writing, conducting interviews, hosting conferences, and other aspects of nonprofit management. I also wrote a report titled "The Neighbors of a Tyranny: North Korean Human Rights in the Context of International Relations and Law." I enjoyed learning how the nonprofit industry is devoted to using knowledge to make positive changes on social issues."*

# BELARUS SOLIDARITY FUND

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**The Belarus Solidarity Fund provides extensive assistance to individuals and organizations supporting democracy in Belarus.**

It has been more than two years since the people of Belarus made it clear in nationwide protests that they reject the presidency of Alexander Lukashenko, a brutal dictator who has ruled the country since 1994. Today, Lukashenko's regime continues its repressive crackdown on civil liberties and has forced most pro-democracy activists and NGOs to relocate to democratic countries.

Launched in August 2020, the Belarus Solidarity Fund has raised more than \$1.2 million in direct aid for Belarusian civil society — from activists who face steep fines or arbitrary imprisonment, to journalists who have had to relocate due to the risk of arrest, to workers who participate in strikes at government factories.

## **Supporting Activists and Journalists on the Frontlines**

HRF allocated more than **\$200,000 in financial aid** this year to activists, protesters, and striking workers defying Lukashenko's repressive regime. In partnership with the First Look Institute, HRF also launched the **Belarusian Journalism Initiative**, which helped dozens of journalists continue their work after being forced to flee the country. This initiative distributed microgrants to 38 independent journalists and grants to three media outlets to assist with operating costs and ensure continuous coverage of the situation in Belarus.

HRF continues to spotlight Lukashenko's human rights abuses by publishing policy notes and blog posts featuring pro-democracy advocates on the main stage of OFF.



Belarusian pro-democracy advocates Tatsiana Khomich, Veronica Tsepkalo, and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya speak about the future of Belarus at OFF 2022.



# Ukraine Solidarity Fund



The Ukraine Solidarity Fund works to provide aid to Ukrainians trapped in the conflict zone and expose Putin's war on democracy and freedom.

On Feb. 24, Putin declared war on Ukraine and began launching missile strikes on cities, shelling military and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine and advancing across the country to overthrow the democratically elected government. Russian forces have indiscriminately targeted kindergartens, hospitals, orphanages, and aid corridors, forcing millions of people to flee or seek safety in bomb shelters.

In March, HRF partnered with a coalition of Ukrainian and US relief teams delivering humanitarian aid to Ukrainians. This coalition works directly with the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, local district leaders, Ukrainian business leaders, NGOs, civil society organizations, and volunteers to coordinate, receive, and distribute aid throughout 12 of Ukraine's most vulnerable regions.

## Providing Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine's Most Vulnerable Regions

# 640

Tonnes of Humanitarian Aid  
(Medical Supplies and Food)

# 700k

Non-Perishable Food Packages  
and Meals Distributed

# 1m+

Crisis-Affected People Have  
Received Humanitarian Aid

# 3.1k

On the Ground Staff  
and Volunteers

# \$360k+

Raised for Ukraine

## Urging the World to Stand With Ukraine

Following Putin's invasion of Ukraine, HRF used its global platform to organize creative advertising campaigns, impactful events, and informative discussions to help people understand the situation in Ukraine.



Oleksandra Matviichuk, head of Ukraine's Center for Civil Liberties, speaks on the OFF 2022 Stage.



In partnership with an advertising agency, Le Truc, HRF places digital ads in Times Square, urging the general public to support Ukrainians.



Dmytro Kuleba, Ukraine's Minister of Foreign Affairs, shares a message urging the human rights community to continue supporting Ukraine and addressing Russian war crimes.



At OFF 2022, (left to right) Anne Applebaum, Oleksandra Matviichuk, Paul Massaro, and Garry Kasparov speak on a panel about Putin's war against democracy.



At the "Voices From Inside" exhibit at OFF 2022, guests listen to short testimonials from Ukrainians living in war zones and record their messages of support.

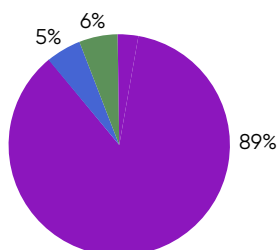


HRF revamps select talks from PutinCon 2018 as part of its "Dissidents and Dictators" podcast series.

# 06 FINANCIALS

## 2021 Expenses

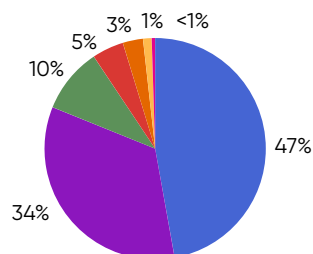
**\$9,232,078.00**



Programs	\$7,964,253.00
Development	\$462,905.00
Administrative	\$533,301.00
Oslo Freedom Forum Norway*	\$271,619.00

## 2021 Revenue

**\$22,740,158.00**

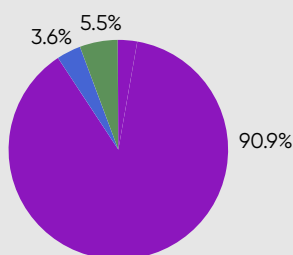


Charity and Foundation Contributions	\$10,731,778.00
Individual Contributions	\$7,715,611.00
Film Revenue	\$2,167,553.00
Investment Return	\$1,051,818.00
Corporate Contributions	\$673,335.00
Oslo Freedom Forum Norway*	\$284,673.00
Other Income	\$115,390.00

2021 HRF Figures Audited by PKF O'Connor Davies, LLP

## 2022 Expenses

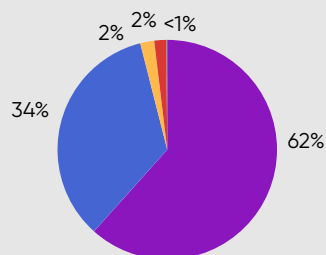
**\$14,091,906.00**



Programs	\$12,405,768.00
Development	\$505,018.00
Administrative	\$779,513.00
Oslo Freedom Forum Norway*	\$401,607.00

## 2022 Revenue

**\$30,815,139.00**



Individual Contributions	\$19,054,414.00
Charity and Foundation Contributions	\$10,539,524.00
Oslo Freedom Forum Norway*	\$631,257.00
Corporate Contributions	\$549,429.00
Other Income	\$40,515.00

2022 Revenue and Expense Totals are Unaudited

\*Revenue and expenses generated by Oslo Freedom Forum Norway for the Oslo Freedom Forum event, planned and executed by HRF.

# 07 STAFF

<b>Bethany Al-Haidari</b> Senior Research Fellow on Human Trafficking	<b>Per Elvestuen</b> Director, OFF in Norway	<b>Karena Halvorsen</b> Events Associate	<b>Elisha Maldonado</b> Communications Director	<b>Alexander Sikorski</b> Senior Policy Advisor
<b>Kristen Anna</b> Research Fellow	<b>Tara Everton</b> Communications Associate	<b>Thor Halvorsen</b> Chief Executive Officer	<b>Alessandro De Nino</b> Comptroller	<b>Venla Stang</b> International Legal Associate
<b>Céline Assaf-Boustani</b> President	<b>Lucian French</b> Designer	<b>Victoria Aas Henriksen</b> Oslo Freedom Forum Associate	<b>Elle Ota</b> Program Officer	<b>Jenny Stinson</b> Events Manager
<b>Holly Baxter</b> Executive Director, Art in Protest	<b>Raven Germaine</b> Accounting and Finance Associate	<b>Malaak Jamal</b> Director, Policy and Research	<b>Alvaro Piaggio</b> Senior Policy Officer	<b>Sherman Teichman</b> Senior Strategy Advisor
<b>Claudia Bennett</b> Legal and Program Officer	<b>Sandra Germaine</b> Chief Talent Officer	<b>Sherry Jeng</b> Senior Development Officer	<b>Daria Pozharko</b> Administrative Assistant	<b>Alexia Tovar García</b> Program Coordinator
<b>Mariana Bernárdez</b> Creative Director	<b>Alex Gladstein</b> Chief Strategy Officer	<b>David July</b> Program Assistant	<b>Vaitiari Rodriguez</b> Research Fellow	<b>Jhanisse Vaca-Daza</b> Freedom Fellowship Director
<b>Kenza Bouanane</b> Legal Research Associate	<b>Cameron Gonzalez</b> Executive Assistant to the CEO	<b>Mohamed Keita</b> Senior Policy Officer	<b>Nayla Saab</b> Creative Consultant	<b>Hannah Van Dijke</b> International Legal Associate
<b>Gustav Deutsch</b> Director of Events	<b>Roberto González</b> Chief Advocacy Officer	<b>Pavel Kutsevol</b> Policy Officer	<b>Natalia Saucedo</b> Communications Associate	<b>Jenny Wang</b> Senior Strategy and Research Associate
<b>Grace-Anna Douglas</b> Digital Media Associate	<b>Elektra Gray</b> Communications Advisor	<b>Seongmin Lee</b> Program Lead, Flash Drives for Freedom	<b>Lisa Schmidt</b> Legal and Policy Consultant	<b>Nasser Weddady</b> Strategic Advisor
<b>Javier El-Hage</b> Chief Legal and Policy Officer	<b>Michelle Gulino</b> Director, Legal and Programs	<b>Alex Li</b> Strategy Associate	<b>Liz Shelbred</b> Development Coordinator	



# 08

# HRF BOARD AND INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

## Members

Garry Kasparov  
CHAIRMAN

Masih Alinejad

Kenneth Anderson

Diego Arria

Abdel Ould Ethmane

Dan Grossman

Thor Halvorssen

Ron Jacobs

Mart Laar

Alexander Lloyd

Jacqueline Moudeina

Amir Ahmad Nasr

Marina Nemat

Yeonmi Park

Park Sang-Hak

W. Brad Stephens

Mutabar Tadjibaeva

Cameron Colby Thomson

Álvaro Vargas Llosa

Konstantina Yaneva

## In Memoriam

**Václav Havel**, *Chairman Emeritus*  
1936 – 2011

**Ramón José Velásquez**  
1916 – 2014

**Dr. George Ayittey**  
1945 – 2022

**Elie Wiesel**  
1928 – 2016

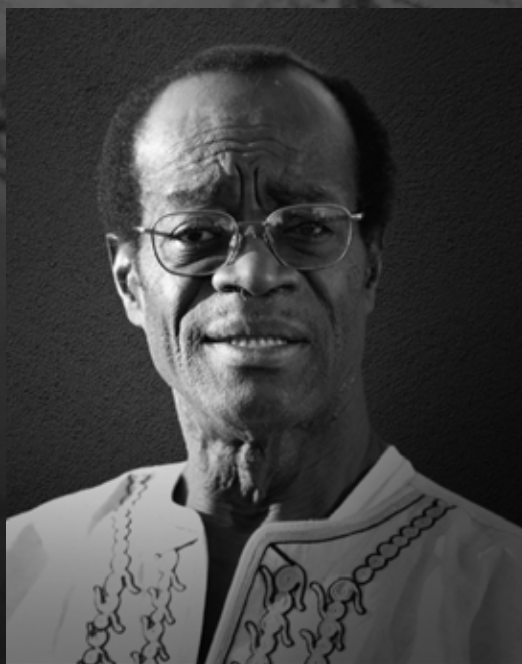
**Vladimir Bukovsky**  
1942 – 2019

**James Q. Wilson**  
1931 – 2012

**Palden Gyatso**  
1933 – 2018

**Harry Wu**  
1937 – 2016

**Eduardo Mendoza**  
1917 – 2009



## Remembering George Ayittey

1945 – 2022

Dr. George Ayittey was a celebrated Ghanaian economist, author, former political prisoner, and the president of the Free Africa Foundation. He served as a founding member of HRF's International Council and was a former OFF speaker. Ayittey dedicated his professional life to exposing the corruption of dictators and the harmful complacency of citizens within African states. He advocated for democratic governance, free market economics, modernized infrastructure, and debt reexamination to promote regional development. HRF will defend Ayittey's legacy and ensure his memory lives on through the mission of promoting freedom and democracy.

09

# JOIN THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT

**HRF hopes you will join its diverse, growing community of changemakers seeking to promote and protect freedom and democracy worldwide.**

HRF's campaigns and events create a ripple effect, inspiring social innovation, policy changes, greater international awareness of human rights issues, alliances, and new philanthropic support for pro-democracy causes. HRF and its community are committed to creating a more peaceful, prosperous, and free world.



## Careers

HRF is a great place to begin or advance your career in human rights. Apply today at [hrf.org](https://hrf.org).



## Volunteer

If you believe you have a unique set of skills or abilities HRF could utilize in the global struggle for freedom, please e-mail [info@hrf.org](mailto:info@hrf.org) with "Volunteer Opportunities" in the subject line.



## Internships

HRF offers paid in-office and remote internships with flexible schedules to students and recent graduates. These positions allow students to engage in human rights work and gain hands-on experience in the nonprofit world. Inquire via e-mail at [interns@hrf.org](mailto:interns@hrf.org).



## Donate to Support Human Rights Today

HRF is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. It relies on the generosity of its donors to make its work possible. Any contribution, big or small, is meaningful. HRF accepts contributions by mail, online donations, cryptocurrency, gifts of stock, charitable annuities, memorial gifts, and legacy gifts. Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of US tax law.

Learn more and make a gift today at [donate.hrf.org](https://donate.hrf.org).



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[contact@hrf.org](mailto:contact@hrf.org)



+1 (212) 246-8486



### Cover Art by ArtLords

This art pays tribute to the children of Ukraine by exploring the simple and innocent act of drawing. The children in this piece call on the world – depicted as a collective of doves morphing into one bird – to gather together and bring peace to their war-torn country. This art was created for an interactive community mural at the 2022 Oslo Freedom Forum (see p. 32).

*Founded by Afghan artists Omaid Sharifi and Kabir Mokamel in 2014, ArtLords is a global grassroots movement of artists dedicated to paving the way for social transformation and behavioral change through the power of art and culture.*

